

## Deuteronomy 14:3-29 - Thursday, September 1st, 2011

(3) "You shall not eat any detestable thing. (4) These *are* the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, (5) the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the mountain goat, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. (6) And you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two parts, *and that* chews the cud, among the animals. (7) Nevertheless, of those that chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, *such as* these: the camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have cloven hooves; they *are* unclean for you. (8) Also the swine is unclean for you, because it has cloven hooves, yet *does not chew* the cud; you shall not eat their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.

- If this is sounding a little familiar, it's because it's a little familiar. What I mean by that is, we studied this in great detail back in Leviticus eleven.
- It's certainly not a passage of scripture that we lend much creed to, because we're quick to dismiss it under the banner of not being for us today.
- However, we'd be grossly remiss were we to take that posture, as these dietary laws concerning clean and unclean foods are rich in meaning.

"... God has given us a picture of the believer's walk in a world of sin: and of the spiritual food provided for him in the Word of God, that he may maintain that walk with the Lord 'in righteousness and true holiness.' [This] has to do with the clean and the unclean animals, fishes, birds, and creeping things, as set forth for Israel by Moses in the ceremonial law. Only those animals which had the cloven hoof and chewed the cud were pronounced clean by Jehovah. Only those fishes which had fins and scales were clean. Certain fowls and the creeping things were 'an abomination' unto the Lord. The cloven hoof represents a walk of separation from sin in a godless world. The chewing of the cud speaks to us of meditation upon the living Word of God, which alone can enable the Christian to walk with the Lord. The fins suggest power to rise above the degrading things that tend to drag us down in defeat. And the scales remind us of the Christian's 'whole armor of God,' given to enable him to resist the devil 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.' Certain birds and the creeping things of the earth speak of the depravity and deceitfulness of sin, over which the child of God can and should live victoriously by His grace through the power of the Holy Spirit and the sacred Scriptures. ...[It] shows us how a redeemed people may live in the midst of a godless world, yet have fellowship with a holy God – only by a separated walk that leads to growth in grace, with consequent power and progress in victorious battle against Satan and sin. All this is the portion of the redeemed people of God, as they find their spiritual strength in the heaven-sent food, which is His unfailing, soul-satisfying Word."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," pp. 3-4

- Here Moses tells them that animals having a divided hoof, chewing their cud were considered clean, or kosher, and could be eaten by them.
- However, animals that did not have a cloven or divided hoof were deemed unclean even if they chewed the cud, and we even have some listed.
- This eating of that which was clean had a practical purpose for their life physically, and it also had a profound application to their life spiritually.

- First, the practical purpose for them physically was that by the Israelites eating certain foods that were clean would protect them from diseases.
- This is why the other cultures surrounding the Israelites would eat these unclean animals, and as a result would become very ill and even die.
- In other words, this is God's way of protecting his children by prohibiting certain dietary practices and foods. He's wants them healthy and holy.

One commentator said; "It is now known that the pig is the intermediate host for several parasitic organisms, some of which can result in tapeworm infestation. One of these worms, the *Taenia solium*, grows to about 2.5 m in length, and is found in poorly cooked pork."

- Be that as it may, by heeding God's Word as it related to these dietary practices, the Israelites were kept safe from these diseases.
- Secondly, in concert with the practical purpose physically, there was a life application spiritually because this would make them distinct.

"God wanted Israel to be separated from the idolatrous practices of the nations surrounding them. The Arabs even today eat the camel. The Canaanites ate swine. The Mohammedan still sets up a barrier against the followers of all other religions by the food he eats. The devout Jew would not think of touching or tasting anything 'common or unclean,' even as Peter said to the risen Lord when he was upon the housetop of Simon the tanner. God's laws concerning Israel's food helped materially to keep the obedient Israelite from the evils of the heathen nations, in the midst of whom they dwelt."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 10

"The animals, in which these two characteristics met, were reckoned clean, and therefore fit for food. It is certain that the minute particularity of these words has some further reference than to the diet of Israel, important though that was, or to accentuate with every meal the necessity of their being a separate people. We, at least, may gather this lesson, that in our daily experience we must combine meditation [chewing the cud] and separation, [separated hoof]. [With] meditation, the cattle do not simply browse on the pastures, but they lie down to chew the cud. It is not enough to peruse our allotted Scripture portion; we must ruminate upon it, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and scripture with scripture. The Holy Ghost will take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, and He will bring all things to our remembrance. [With] separation; ... 'the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' We have not meditated to good purpose unless we have felt its keen edge. Detachment from the world must follow on true attachment to Christ. ... The two must be combined. The swine divideth the hoof, but cheweth not the cud, and was therefore unclean. A man may profess to love his Bible, but the supreme test is his daily separation from evil. On the other hand, our daily life ought to emanate, not from without, which is Pharisaism, but from within, where we chew the cud of holy meditation."

F.B. Meyer

Again, Louis Talbot echoed the same thing when he writes; "...the cloven hoof is a picture of a separated walk; the chewing of the cud, of meditation upon the Word of God. The two are inseparable; therefore, we would consider them together."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

(9) "These you may eat of all that *are* in the waters: you may eat all that have fins and scales. (10) And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it *is* unclean for you.

- Moses rounds a corner going from how animals walk and eat, to how fish swim and eat. Again, we have physical and spiritual application.
- If a fish had scales and fins, it was kosher and could be eaten, however, if it didn't, it was not kosher, and this would also include shellfish.

"This description of the unclean fishes undoubtedly refers to the scavengers of the sea, which have neither fins nor scales. Lacking fins, they have no power to lift themselves above the slime at the bottom of the sea. Lacking fins, they can make no progress in moving about. And lacking scales, they cannot withstand the impurities of the environment in which they live. For example, the eel and the oyster have neither fins nor scales. They live in the slime at the bottom of the water; and they take into their systems the impurities found there. Now the clean fish had both fins and scales: fins, with which to make progress against the current of the stream; and scales, with which to resist the elements in which they lived. Unlike the oyster, which attached itself to a rock at the bottom of the sea, there to remain; the fishes with fins and scales could make progress, because of their power to rise above their environment."

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

(11) "All clean birds you may eat. (12) But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, (13) the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds; (14) every raven after its kind; (15) the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after their kinds; (16) the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl, (17) the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, (18) the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.

- We now go from animals and fish to birds. It's interesting that there are no specifics given to distinguish between clean and unclean.
- Though it does seem that there is a common denominator of sorts in that all of the 20 unclean birds are either predators or scavengers.

"Some Christians are like the scavenger birds, the vulture and the raven; they appear to rejoice in the failure of others, bearing tales, repeating gossip, injuring other Christians, and driving the unsaved away from Christ and the church. I know a man who was a drunkard for years:" then he was saved by faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. He gave a glorious testimony for the Lord, until one day he fell into the old habit of drink. With what results? Those vultures came like cloud to break the news to me, that man's pastor, and to everyone who knew him. Instead of praying for the member of the body of Christ who needed to confess his sin and get back into fellowship with God, they drove him from them; in misery and sorrow he shunned their very presence. ...May God give us 'milk of human-kindness,' that we may not be like the vulture and the raven!"

Louis T. Talbot "Fins and Scales," p. 11

(19) "Also every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. (20) "You may eat all clean birds.

- Now from animals, fish, and birds we go to insects where we learn that certain kinds of beetles, locusts and grasshoppers were kosher.
- Perhaps this would explain the dietary practices of one John the Baptist who we know ate these kinds of kosher insects. "No thanks!"
- The thought is that clean and unclean insects are in keeping with the theme of God's direction and protection for the children of Israel.

(21) "You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God. "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

- Here we have these detailed instructions for the Israelites to get rid of dead animals so as to not become unclean and thus diseased.

- History tells us that if a dead rat was found in Israel it was to be disposed of. Everyone and everything was to be completely cleaned.
- When the bubonic plague killed one fourth of Europe's population by the year 1350, the Israelites were, for the most part, untouched.
- The reason they stayed healthy is because they observed these commands. Actually they were even blamed for causing the plague.

**Jewish History Sourcebook: The Black Death and the Jews 1348-1349 CE** "In 1348 there appeared in Europe a devastating plague which is reported to have killed off ultimately twenty-five million people. By the fall of that year the rumor was current that these deaths were due to an international conspiracy of Jewry to poison Christendom. It was reported that the leaders in the Jewish metropolis of Toledo had initiated the plot and that one of the chief conspirators was a Rabbi Peyret who had his headquarters in Chambéry, Savoy, whence he dispatched his poisoners to France, Switzerland, and Italy."

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.html>

According to another source; "when a dead rat was found by a Jew it was to be disposed of, and everyone and everything was to be cleaned up. The Jews were persecuted for poisoning these wells with the rats that were disposed of and thus caused the Bubonic Plague also known as Black Death. In Basel, Switzerland, the city's Jews were rounded up, locked in a wooden structure and burned alive."

On commentator said it best this way; "In general it can be said that these laws protected Israel from bad diet, dangerous vermin, and communicable diseases."

- Actually this is the common thread that is woven into the fabric of every animal, fish, bird, and reptile; it's God's direction and protection.
- In other words we see it right from the start with the clean and unclean animals which is based on their hoofs and chewing of the cud.
- The separated hoof speaks to the "direction" of our walk in this world, and the chewing of the cud speaks to the protection of the Word.

Of these dietary laws, one commentator wrote; "It has been rightly said that the Bible is a book no man could write even if he would, and no man would write even if he could. ...If someone were able to write a seemingly divinely inspired book in his own energy, he wouldn't write a book like this one. Why? Because of chapters like this one ...a chapter that if I were writing the bible, I wouldn't necessarily include..."

- Before we move on and complete the chapter, I think it's incumbent upon me to address a very important question as it relates to all this.

- Are we as Christians under any obligation to observe these dietary laws and practices? The answer is simply no, and here's why:
- First, Acts 15 records for us what is called "The Jerusalem Council," which declared that Christians weren't required to obey these laws.

- Second, in writing to the Corinthian church, in 1 Corinthians 6:12, the Apostle Paul writes that all things are lawful, but not profitable.
- The third reason is; Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, writes that we have the liberty to eat anything if it's received with thanksgiving.

(22) "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. (23) And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. (24) But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry *the tithe*, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, (25) then you shall exchange *it* for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.

- Now Moses rounds yet another corner, this time addressing the need to "truly tithe all the increase," from what their fields produced.
- We talked about this in more detail two weeks ago when we were in Deuteronomy chapter twelve, so we won't rehash it yet again.
- Suffice it to say, tithing is also in keeping with God's protection and direction in that He protects us from the devourer when we tithe.

(26) And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. (27) You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. (28) "At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. (29) And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

- Here, Moses is getting into the details of tithing as it relates to it being done with a cheerful heart, in that it was a get to and not a got to.
- He goes into more detail regarding the Levites, as the priestly tribe being the recipients of the tithe as they had no part in the inheritance.
- Then lastly, he goes on to describe how it is that they are to give to the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord may bless them.